

UCLA

American Indian Culture and Research Journal

Title

Wabanaki Homeland and the New State of Maine: The 1820 Journal and Plans of Survey of Joseph Treat. Edited with an introduction by Micah A. Pawling.

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/4x3133h5>

Journal

American Indian Culture and Research Journal , 32(1)

ISSN

0161-6463

Author

Salisbury, Neal

Publication Date

2008

DOI

10.17953

Copyright Information

This work is made available under the terms of a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial License, available at <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>

is connected to real people to whom one is related and has clan connections with; in short, Navajo history is connected to one's family and kin. Such oral traditions are evocative of the lives—the movements and endureances—of one's grandmothers and grandfathers. History here is less an abstraction (out there as it were) than the lived realities of Navajos who are connected through knowledge of specific places, further evoked in the actual telling of Navajo traditional stories, and meant to be reflected about and upon. This is history as engagement. That means listening. As Denetdale concludes, "this process encompasses the recovery and revitalization of our community, family, language, and traditions. It is my hope that this study will offer Navajos and other Native peoples an opportunity to share my journey of reclaiming the Navajo past on multiple levels that range from the personal to the national." *Reclaiming Diné History* is an excellent first step.

Anthony K. Webster

Southern Illinois University, Carbondale

Wabanaki Homeland and the New State of Maine: The 1820 Journal and Plans of Survey of Joseph Treat. Edited with an introduction by Micah A. Pawling. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press; published in conjunction with the Penobscot Indian Nation, Indian Island, ME. 300 pages. \$34.95 cloth.

In September 1820 the newly independent state of Maine commissioned Joseph Treat to "explore," map, and report on lands on the upper Penobscot and St. John rivers, most of which were Wabanaki (primarily Penobscot and Maliseet) homelands, ostensibly to gain information about the disputed US–Canadian boundary in that area. A trained surveyor, Treat recruited John Neptune, Lieutenant Governor of the Penobscots, as a guide, along with a second Maine settler for the expedition. During the twenty-four-day trip, Treat kept a journal that became the basis for his written report (since lost) and drew several dozen maps that illustrated his findings. With the active participation of the Penobscot Nation, Micah Pawling has edited the journal, reproduced copies of the maps, and supplied an introduction that places the expedition in the context of Penobscot relations with Massachusetts and Maine over the preceding quarter century. Pawling contends that the journal is significant because it documents the Penobscots' relations with the land as conveyed to Treat by John Neptune.

Pawling's introduction focuses on tensions between the Penobscots and the state of Massachusetts that date to a treaty they had concluded in 1796. Although the Penobscots had ceded land along the Penobscot River to the state, the treaty stipulated that all islands in the river from Old Town Island (now Indian Island) northward remain in Penobscot hands. An immediate issue was ownership of twelve tiny islands that extended south from Indian Island for less than a mile. When settlers began to fish from the islands and

build mills on and between them, the Penobscots dispatched delegations to Boston to protest the illegal occupation of what they considered part of Old Town Island. The islands had served the Penobscots and their forebears as anadromous fishing sites for countless generations and were otherwise socially and culturally significant. The state ignored Penobscot claims and in 1804–5 sold the islands to Joseph Treat and various partners. In 1813 a Penobscot delegation to Boston persuaded Massachusetts to purchase some of the islands the state had sold and return them to the Penobscots. Three such purchases—all from Treat—were consummated. Meanwhile the Penobscots started to lease portions of their land to settlers as a means of retaining ownership while realizing some benefits from the newcomers' presence. The leading lessee was Joseph Treat. In 1818 Treat authored a petition from the Penobscots that resulted in far more land being transferred to the state than the Natives had intended. The principal beneficiary of this cession was Treat. When the new state of Maine forged a treaty with the Penobscots in 1820 in order to gain the tribe's recognition of it as the sovereign state that had replaced Massachusetts, Treat was one of the state's witnesses.

Given his economic ambitions, Treat's interest in the expedition of 1820 is understandable. But it hardly prepared him to become a culturally sensitive recorder of Penobscot history. For John Neptune's part, although he guided a survey in 1804 on which Treat also worked, he was among the most forceful advocates of Penobscot rights to the disputed islands and other homelands, and had led at least one of the tribe's several delegations to Boston. At the treaty conference that immediately preceded the expedition, Neptune, as the highest-ranking Penobscot present, played a leading role in ceremonies and negotiations and pressed his people's grievances and demands. The two men had directly opposing interests in the disputes between their respective peoples. Pawling notes this opposition but does not speculate on Treat's motives in recording aspects of Penobscot history. Certainly they did not originate in his personal relationship with Neptune; the relatively few references to Neptune in the journal imply that although he and Treat were mutually respectful, they were more guarded than intimate with one another.

Pawling contends that the principal result of the two men's collaboration is the journal's rendering, both in the text and on the maps, the Penobscot names of many of the geographic features they encountered. Although Treat explicitly credits Neptune as his source for only a few of the names, Pawling's inference that the Penobscot guide supplied most of them is undoubtedly accurate. After all, the expedition spent most of its time in lands previously unknown to Treat and other settlers. Even where settlers had invented their own name, Treat often supplied the Penobscot term and meaning alongside it, for example, "Great Works Stream—or Namadunkeeunk which means rapids near the main river" (75). Yet many more such names are recorded without translation, for example, in the same entry, Madamiscontis, which Pawling's citation indicates is now called Blackman Stream, and Sunkhaze, which Treat terms simply "a Stream." Still others are ambiguous; for example, does "Pa,ta,quan,ga,miss, or Round Pond" represent a Penobscot–English translation, or are these two unrelated names (151)? Although Pawling

plausibly infers that Neptune declined to translate or otherwise reveal Penobscot understandings of many names and places he and Treat visited, he does not ask whether Treat had any curiosity about such meanings. Pawling notes Treat's care in attempting to achieve phonetic accuracy in his written renderings of the names of places, but the maps and journal record only a handful of elaborations that indicate some dimension of Penobscot history, for example, "Olemon, or Paint Stream, so called, by reason of the Indians having formerly found good red paint or red ochre on this stream" (81). At the same time, Treat's observations frequently indicate less culturally sensitive motives. He repeatedly evaluates the geography of places in terms of their potential for commodification. The first Penobscot-owned stretch of river that he observes "on both sides is very good," but the next stretch of river "does not appear so good as below—the growth generally pine, hemlock and spruce and mixed—soil rather rocky." Still later that day he observed that the land would make good farming land (85). It would seem that Treat needed Neptune to find these places but not to tell him how settlers might use them. Even more revealing about Treat's regard for Penobscots is his observation that the Maliseets on the St. John River "appear to be very civil and good Indians and are more industrious than the Penobscot Indians" (184).

Given Treat's contempt for the Penobscots and his disinterest in their history, and Neptune's understandable suspicion of the English, in what sense does the journal represent a bicultural collaboration? Like "explorers" beginning with Columbus, Treat needed to attach names to places as part of his effort to legitimize Maine's claims to ownership. Unlike many such explorers, he recognized the chronological priority of Native history and was willing to co-opt Native names for places in which his own people's history had just begun. For his part, Neptune was not only eager to supply Treat with Penobscot names as a means to reinforce Penobscot land claims but also to perpetuate the living presence of the land and its places, particularly sacred ones, among present and future generations of Penobscots. In this sense their collaboration would seem to represent less a cooperative undertaking than a momentary convergence of conflicting interests. But regardless of how we finally assess the relationship between the two protagonists, we are indebted to Pawling for bringing this remarkable document to our attention and contextualizing it in such illuminating fashion.

Neal Salisbury
Smith College

Washita Memories: Eyewitness Views of Custer's Attack on Black Kettle's Village. By Richard G. Hardorff. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2006. 474 pages. \$34.95 cloth.

For Cheyennes the military attacks at Sand Creek, the Washita, and Summit Springs have special significance. The attack at the Washita holds a prominent place in studies of Indian–white conflict and was immortalized on film in *Little*